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Excerpts from a letter from
Detroit, Michigan
June 15, 1968

I would like in this letter to sum up the experiences we have been having in our special Militant campaign.

Our Militant sales work was pitiful up until the special campaign. Our weekly bundle order was 100 and the only regular sales we had were: servicing three bookstores, weekly literature table sales at Wayne State University. In addition, there were occasional sales at demonstrations or meetings that came up locally. At one time we had had in the branch a requirement that every member had to go out on a sale at least once a month. However, this requirement was dropped about a year ago and the members generally immediately stopped participating in Militant sales. Every now and then there was an attempt to enthuse people about sales but only a very small number of members actually were consistent in their attention toward the Militant. In the middle of May, I became Acting Militant Agent (we had not had a functioning Agent for about 8-9 months) and my intent was to get sales rolling along consistently, involve more members in the sales work and eventually work up to a larger weekly bundle order. The special campaign around the French events was just the explosive charge needed to accomplish all of my aims in one fell swoop.

Our experiences here in Detroit seem to be somewhat different than those in other areas so I'll try to fill in some background as I go through the facts and figures.

Although we were concerned about getting the Militant into the hands of anti-war activists, we have been reaching auto workers with the news about France. Comrades were already a little pre-conditioned to looking toward the plant gates as a result of the Labor Leadership Assembly for Peace newspaper distributions conducted by the Detroit CEWV at plant gates; an invitation for the DCEWV to send a speaker to the Dodge Main Local 3 union membership meeting as a result of the newspaper distributions and our election campaign efforts toward getting candidates before union audiences. Comrades liked the idea of selling at the auto plants.

Enclosed is a chart. You will note that our sales are not 90% or 100%. Part of this is due to the fact that we have left-over copies, part due to the fact that we don't get our sales figures from the bookstores for several weeks after the close of the sales period. We are not unhappy over the Militants still remaining at the hq because we want to use them in classes, for future contact and educational work and for special "SAMPLE" distributions aimed at specific groups or meetings. (Then there are often cases like the fact that 300 papers were taken out of circulation here and sent to the SDS convention and sales were slow there.)

On plant gate sales:

Because most of the Militant Army either works or attends school, the plant gate sales take place mostly in the early morning. This means that people get up at 4:30, 5:00-5:30 a.m. in order to gather the crew together and hit the plant in time to catch the workers going in to work. After about an hour's sales, everyone then goes

on to work or school. There's a group of about 10 people who go out very regularly weekly in this manner. Some persons go out a couple of times a week in the morning. One crew was so full of vim and vigor that they sold at one plant, jumped into the car, raced to another plant and had a second sale!

The salesmen usually feature, in their pitch, the French events plus a shout about the black struggle. For example: "Read about auto workers taking over the plants in France, the Black Panther Party in California." "Read about the revolution in France. See article about the Black Panthers." "Get your copy of the Militant! Articles about French workers and students taking over the plants and universities. Read about the Black Panthers."

One thing we have noted: There are times when we go out to the same plant twice during the week -- at the beginning of the week with one issue of the Militant and at the end of the week with the new issue. Often workers will glance at the front page and say, "I got that the other day." This was especially true of the 5/31 and 6/7 issues which were very similar in layout and headline (pictures across top half, headlines about civil war, revolt in France.) It does help to have very different looking front pages. It also helps to have some featured headline on the back page on the black struggle, if possible, which can be used as a second front page.

Salesmen coming back from the Ford Rouge plant remarked at the large numbers of black workers wearing Afro dress, natural hair and voicing black nationalist ideas. There have been no remarks about hostility from workers although a couple of plant guards were nasty on one occasion. Most of the plant guards have bought the paper after hearing it hawked beside the gate for a while. A fairly frequently heard comment from those black workers (and high schoolers) who do not buy the paper is: "We've got our own troubles here. We're not interested in France . . . we need a revolution here."

One very good fringe benefit that we have derived from this special campaign is that new YSAers, who generally don't have much contact with older branch members, have developed a high respect for the sales abilities of these members. This activity is a natural for involving teams of SWP-YSA/old-young members.

Organization of the campaign:

As soon as the new bundle comes in, the Militants are stuffed with the latest Forum leaflet and divided up into smaller bundles. Each bundle is then rubber banded and a sheet of paper with info on sales location, time, etc. is slipped under the band. People can go to the headquarters, look for an appropriate bundle on the special table set up in the office, sign out on our Pink Sheet form and take off. Unsold copies and/or money is brought back right after the sale; envelopes are provided for money which is deposited in a special can on Militant campaign table; salesmen sign in. Instructions on procedure are explained at SWP and YSA meetings and, in addition, a large poster with instructions is posted at the office entrance. Teams are organized at SWP and YSA meetings or by a phone call to the Militant Agent. A large sales chart is pinned to the office door and each person is supposed to note his or her sale every time he or

she goes out. A lively but healthy competition has resulted among the younger members.

Reports are given at every branch meeting and material sent in from NY is used to give the political framework within which we are fitting our Militant sales and in order to motivate members to continue sales activities. For example, at the last branch meeting I gave a lengthy report quoting from the various leaflets and letters put out by various branches across the country, Farrell's report, etc.

An announcement was made at our Forum about the special campaign and I then urged everyone to help us with the sales. An elderly Afro-American volunteered to sell a bundle. He took 15 and came back to the next Forum with \$1.50 and took 15 more. As far as I know, this is the only instance of a non-member being involved in the sales.

I have been discussing with the YSA organizer the possibility of setting up a plan whereby a member pledges to sell at least 200 Militants a week and keeps 6 cents from each paper sold. If this can be worked out practically, we could maintain a bundle order of 1000 throughout the warm weather, a few high schoolers could earn \$12 or more a week while doing political work and we could establish a pattern of sales locations and times.

Suggestion from one of our bookstore servicers: It helps to have the front page designed so that when it is folded and placed on a bookstore rack, the whole headline can be seen in one half or the other. The 6/7 issue, for example, had to be opened up fully in order to reveal the headline properly. To end on a positive note: the members are thrilled with the paper and all suggestions are meant only to make it better and better all the time.

Evelyn Sell

ISSUE	BUNDLE	COLLEGES	HIGH SCHOOLS	PLANTS	DEBS HALL	BKSTRS	MISC	STREET
5/31	486	80 at 2 coll.	75 at 4 HS	150 at 3	3 plus	19 inc.	20	-
6/7	1000	190 at 4 coll.	76 at 1 HS	215 at 5	10 plus	?	44	45
*6/14	1000	29 at 1		167 at 3			4	

* Half-way through sales period.

Quite often there is more than 1 sale at a particular college, high school or plant. For example, we go to Ford Rouge and Dodge Main every week but three different crews may go to each plant, sometimes hitting the morning shift, sometimes hitting the afternoon.

The street sales for the 6/14 issue were all downtown. We plan more street sales now because the regular college sessions are over and high schools are recessing for the summer.

The Misc. category includes sales at a Stokely Carmichael meeting, a demonstration protesting the appearance of a Zionist leader, union meetings.